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ABSTRACT

The increase in the number of cases detained is driven largely by the increase in the referrals to the juvenile court. Youth were detained at some point between referral to court and case disposition in 21% (321,200) of all delinquency cases. The proportion of cases the courts chose to detain was only slightly higher in 1994 than in 1985, and the pattern of similar growth of cases involving detention and cases referred was seen in all offense categories except drug law violations. The number of drug offense cases involving detention increased almost twice as much as the number of referrals for drug violations between 1985 and 1994. Between 1985 and 1994, the use of detention increased most among drug offense cases involving blacks and males. In 1994, black youth accounted for more than two of five cases involving detention, although black juveniles represented only one-third of juvenile court referrals during that year. In 1994, 28% of cases involving black youth resulted in detention compared with 17% of cases involving white youth. This is a finding of interest to those working with young people in cities with high concentrations of minorities. (Contains two tables and one graph.) (SLD)

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Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.
Fact Sheet #56, March 1997

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Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

OJJDP Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

Shay Bilchik, Administrator

Fact Sheet #56 March 1997

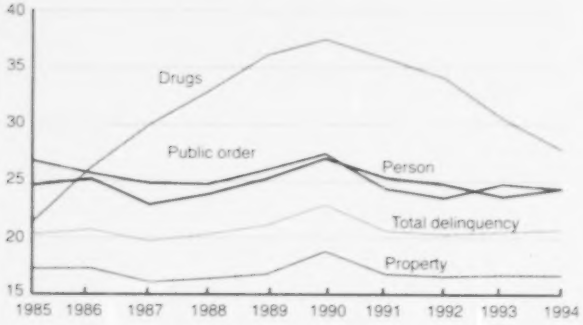
Detention and Delinquency Cases, 1985–1994

by Eileen Poe-Yamagata, M.S.

The increase in the number of cases detained is driven largely by the increase in the referrals to juvenile court

Youth were detained at some point between referral to court and case disposition in 21% (or 321,200) of all delinquency cases disposed in 1994. Detention was less likely among youth charged with a property offense (17%) than with public order (24%), person (24%), or drug law violation (28%) offenses.

Between 1985 and 1994, the use of detention remained relatively constant among all cases except those involving drug law violations



The proportion of cases the courts chose to detain was only slightly higher in 1994 than in 1985 (21% versus 20%). Consequently, the 43% increase in the number of delinquency cases involving detention paralleled the 41% increase in the number of cases handled by juvenile courts during that period. This pattern of similar growth in the number of cases involving detention and the number of cases referred was seen in all offense categories except drug law violations. The number of drug offense cases involving detention increased almost twice as much as the number of referrals for drug violations between 1985 and 1994.

Except for drug cases, the juvenile court's use of detention was relatively stable between 1985 and 1994

	Percent of Cases Involving Detention			Percent Change in the Number of Cases, 1985 and 1994	
Case Type	1985	1990	1994	Total Detained	
Total	**20%**	**23%**	**21%**	**41%**	**43%**
Person	25	27	24	93	90
Property	17	19	17	22	19
Drugs	21	38	28	62	111
Public order	27	27	24	50	36
Male	**21%**	**24%**	**22%**	**38%**	**44%**
Person	26	29	26	85	84
Property	18	20	18	18	18
Drugs	22	39	29	70	125
Public order	26	28	25	52	43
Female	**18%**	**18%**	**16%**	**54%**	**38%**
Person	18	19	18	124	130
Property	13	14	12	40	23
Drugs	19	28	20	26	31
Public order	29	26	22	45	13
White	**18%**	**20%**	**17%**	**26%**	**17%**
Person	21	23	21	90	87
Property	15	17	14	13	3
Drugs	18	27	18	24	22
Public order	25	26	21	25	3
Black	**26%**	**29%**	**28%**	**78%**	**92%**
Person	29	31	29	94	91
Property	22	24	23	41	45
Drugs	34	51	44	240	339
Public order	32	31	31	135	133

Detention of females charged with property and public order offenses increased less than referrals to court because of the declining use of detention among these cases.

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Between 1985 and 1994, the use of detention increased most among drug offense cases involving blacks and males

In 1994 males accounted for four out of five cases involving detention. Juvenile courts detained a greater proportion of delinquency cases involving males than females in 1994 (22% versus 16%). Between 1985 and 1994, the number of cases resulting in detention increased more for males than females (44% versus 38%).

Changes in the court's use of detention among male and female youth varied by offense. Between 1985 and 1994, the use of detention for drug offense cases increased more among males (22% to 29%) than among females (19% to 20%). The likelihood of detention for public order offenses declined more among females (29% to 22%) than among males (26% to 25%) during this time.

In 1994 black youth accounted for more than two out of five cases involving detention. However, black juveniles represented only one-third of juvenile court referrals during that year. In 1994, 28% of cases involving black youth resulted in detention compared with 17% of cases involving white youth. In fact, among all offense categories, black youth were more likely to be detained than white youth during every year between 1985 and 1994.

Growth in the number of cases involving detention was more than five times greater for black youth than white youth (92% versus 17%) between 1985 and 1994. This disproportionate increase is largely driven by the rise in juvenile court referrals involving black youth during this time. However, it also reflects the greater likelihood of detention among drug offense cases involving black youth in 1994 than in 1985 (44% versus 34%).

Compared with 1985, a higher percentage of youth sent to detention centers in 1994 were charged with a person offense (25% versus 19%)

	1985	1990	1994
Detained Cases	**224,500**	**297,500**	**321,200**
Case Type			
Person	19%	22%	25%
Property	50	48	42
Drugs	7	9	10
Public order	23	21	22
Gender			
Male	84%	85%	84%
Female	16	15	16
Race			
White	64%	57%	53%
Black	32	39	43
Other	3	4	4

Note: Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

- The proportion of youth held for person and drug offense cases increased between 1985 and 1994 while the proportion detained for property and public order offenses declined.
- The detained population contained a larger proportion of black youth in 1994 than in 1985.

For further information

This Fact Sheet is based on the report *Juvenile Court Statistics 1994*. Copies are available from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's (OJJDP's) Juvenile Justice Clearinghouse, 800–638–8736. OJJDP also supports distribution of a PC-compatible software version of the data analyzed in *Juvenile Court Statistics*. For a copy of the software, *Easy Access to Juvenile Court Statistics*, call the National Juvenile Court Data Archive at the National Center for Juvenile Justice, 412–227–6950. This software can also be downloaded from OJJDP's home page: http://www.ncjrs.org/ojjhome.htm.

Eileen Poe-Yamagata is a Research Analyst at the National Juvenile Court Data Archive, which is supported by an OJJDP grant.

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